

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2009

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

As our men and women continue to bravely serve and sacrifice for our nation in the most dangerous parts of the world, we are continually reminded that we must have the capability to provide our veterans the care they need when they return home. Physical and mental treatments are equally important and over the past few years both these needs have risen considerably. We are extremely proud of the Vet Centers we currently have in Salt Lake City and Provo. Additionally, we were very pleased to learn this past August that the veterans in southwestern Utah will soon be receiving a fully-staffed Vet Center.

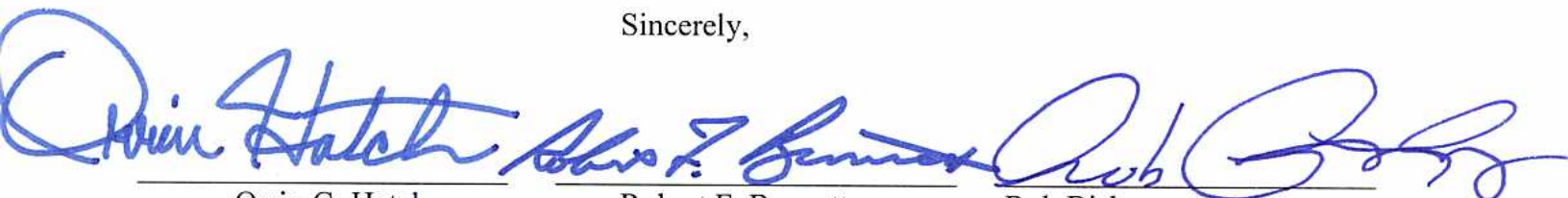
However, as we examine the demand for Vet Centers in our key population centers, we believe Ogden is a necessary site in which to locate the next Vet Center. With the upcoming passage of legislation funding the establishment of 28 additional Vet Centers, we hope the Veterans Administration would agree that Ogden meets the criteria to be selected as one of these sites.

In considering this request, it is important to note that approximately 30% of Utah's veterans are concentrated around Ogden, making it the second largest veteran population in the state. However, due to the strain on local staff and facilities, the Salt Lake City Vet Center finds it necessary to have staff travel a considerable distance to Ogden on a regular basis to help address the mental health demands of veterans located there. The addition of a Vet Center to the Ogden area would both alleviate this strain and provide a critical service for northern Utah's veterans.

We have each been approached by individual members and leaders of the veteran community, all of whom express the need for a Vet Center in Ogden. We believe their advocacy, together with the size of the veteran population, the geographic separation from the other Vet Centers in the State, and the demonstrated need for mental health services in that area, combine to make an Ogden an ideal location for an additional Vet Center.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator

Robert F. Bennett
United States Senator

Rob Bishop
Member of Congress